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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR NOAA FISHERIES EMPLOYEES
LAWRENCE BIONDO AND RODNEY PLATT TO TRAVEL TO SRI LANKA

REF: USDOC 02248

1. Post grants country clearance to NOAA fisheries employees, Lawrence Biondo and Rodney Platt to travel to Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 24-28, 2007. The purpose of the visit is to conduct audits for the USDOC Seafood Inspection Program. Embassy control officer is Mr. Richard Merrin, Commercial Attache and Economic Officer, telephone no. (94-11) 249 8770, fax (94-11) 249 8820, email MerrinRC@state.gov.

2. Post understands that no additional logistical arrangements are required.

3. As far in advance of the visit as possible, visitors must provide specific details to the control officer of all support requirements they will need while at post. Support requirements include procurement requests, motor pool usage, shipping assistance, and any and all other service requirements that will be needed upon arrival or during the visit.

4. Political and security developments emerge quickly and frequently in Sri Lanka and the embassy is monitoring these developments. The current unrest and spate of violent incidents in the northern and eastern part of the island has heightened tensions island-wide. A Ceasefire Agreement signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2002 has been marred by increasing violence, which has recently included attacks involving civilians in the north and east of the country. While foreigners have not in the past been targeted in the violence, it is still uncertain whether an August 14, 2006 bomb which hit the security detail of the Pakistani High Commissioner's convoy was targeted at the High Commissioner or exclusively at GSL security forces. Once you arrive in Sri Lanka, please make sure you register with the Consular Office so the Embassy can communicate any changes in the situation. As always, we urge you to be cautious and aware of your surroundings.

5. TDY visitors to Sri Lanka who are coming for official business purposes must have a visa to enter Sri Lanka, whether they are traveling on diplomatic, official or tourist passports. Post will be able to assist in arranging airport visas only for those passengers who are arriving from a country in which there is no Sri Lanka Embassy. If there is a Sri Lanka embassy in your country of residence, please arrange for a visa through that Embassy. All travelers must send to Letitia DeSilva (DeSilvaL@State.Gov) and the control officer (Richard Merrin (MerrinRC@state.gov)), the following information: Full Name, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Passport Number, Place of Issue, Date of Issue, Expiration Date, length of stay in Sri Lanka and country from which you will be applying for the visa. The Embassy will send a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the MFA will instruct the Sri Lanka Embassy to issue the visa. This process may take up to two weeks.

¶16. Travel by Official Americans to the North and East of Sri Lanka has been restricted until further notice. Any travel to these areas requires prior approval by the Ambassador (or the Charge in his absence).

¶17. Travelers should exercise caution when working in and near Government facilities and avoid large gatherings due to the threat of a potential terrorist incident. Petty crime is common in Colombo and travelers should avoid using public transportation other than radio or hotel taxis. Travelers should keep money or jewelry, when not in immediate use, in hotel safe deposit boxes. Recent cases of credit card fraud have been reported. Travelers are encouraged to either pay with cash or to watch when a merchant swipes the card for a transaction to ensure it is not swiped more than once.

¶18. All TDY personnel must check in with the Regional Security Officer on their first working day in Colombo to receive a security briefing and an update regarding the terrorist threat. Please coordinate with your control officer to schedule this briefing. Visitors requiring access to classified information while visiting post MUST forward their security clearance via cable to the RSO. Again, for emergency contact purposes, all official visitors are required to register, in person, at the Embassy's Consular Section, on their first working day or as soon thereafter as practicable.

¶19. Travelers whose security orientation training is not current are strongly urged to participate in one of the NFATC security overseas seminars for TDY personnel before travel commences.

¶110. An Embarkation Tax of SLR 1,500 is required. This tax is normally included in the airline ticket charges and travelers should verify the tax has been included.

¶111. Visitors to the Embassy wishing to access their OpenNet e-mail from their home post should inform their control officer before departure. If access to e-mail is necessary, visitors should have their control officer provide the Colombo ISC office with the following information at least five working days in advance of their arrival at post: -- visitor's first name, middle initial and last name, arrival date at post, departure date at post, visitor's home OpenNet Exchange Server Name, the Exchange IP Address and the Domain Name. The contact e-mail address for Colombo ISC office is: ColomboISCHelpDesk (SMTP: ColomboISCHelpDesk@state.gov). Colombo's ISC office will create the guest account and set it up for email access. When the visitor arrives at post, they will need to check in with the Colombo ISC office (Room 134) to sign for a User ID and Password. The Colombo ISC office staff will review with the visitor the steps for accessing their home e-mail.

¶112. The Embassy Health Unit suggests that all TDY employees in Sri Lanka for more than 14 days schedule a briefing with the Foreign Service Health Practitioner (FSHP). Also, your control officer can arrange for an electronic version of the Colombo Health Booklet to be sent to you via email. Please be advised that while in Sri Lanka, you cannot use your American health insurance for health care received from local providers, laboratories, and hospitals. You can obtain receipts for care received in country to submit to your health insurance plan for reimbursement. Some facilities will accept credit card payment, but most require cash. Arrangements for deferring payment for emergency care are possible if arranged through the Health Unit, but you must clear all bills for health services received outside of the Health Unit prior to leaving Sri Lanka.

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